

S 2 I NEWS

Jan-Feb, 2006

S2I News is a bi-monthly publication of Strategies 2 Innovate, Inc. Our 2006 series is devoted to leaders of small and rapidly growing business. Our theme will focus on how they can streamline their business processes and make their operations run more smoothly and cost efficiently, thereby generating more profits.

Editorial: In our last newsletter we said this issue would address the strategic positioning model for R&D. If you are interested in this model, please contact us at the email below for free information on this topic.

Strategies 2 Innovate, Inc.

We work with leaders of small businesses to accelerate the task of growing their business through innovation. Our approach focuses on business process improvement based on our Innovation Pentagon™ model. Read about us and visit our **knowledge portal** at the web address below, or call us toll-free at 1-877-978-8242.

Sign-on for this newsletter using the sign-on button at our web-site home page, or forward this newsletter to someone who might benefit from it.

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How to Improve Your Business Processes – and Profit!

As a business leader, can you identify with any of the following symptoms?

- ❑ You're constantly dealing with **problems** that need to be solved.
- ❑ The **quality** of your products or services is not where it should be.
- ❑ Your operation isn't as **cost** effective as you need it to be.
- ❑ **Information** is not flowing from one part of your business to another.
- ❑ You need to increase **production** to meet demand but you're limited by resources and capital.
- ❑ You're constantly having to **push** employees to get things done, or your often **checking** that things have been done properly.
- ❑ There's never enough time to devote to **growing** your business.
- ❑ You're spending up to **half of your time** working on the day-to-day operations of your company.
- ❑ You feel **exhausted** at the end of the day.
- ❑ When you're on **vacation** (if you can take one), you're constantly worrying whether things are getting done at work.

If you identify with one or more of the above items, then it's likely your business will benefit from improvements to your business processes.

What has happened is that the way you do business (your processes) have not kept pace with the growing demands on your company. These processes need to be improved so that your business runs more smoothly and efficiently without having to rely on you to make it happen. There is nothing unusual about this at all. In fact, almost every growing company gets to this point at some time. Heavy use-of-time by a business leader/owner in the area of daily operations is an indication of a lack of clear processes that empower employees to conduct the functional activities of daily operations.

The good news is that changes can be made to improve your situation and remove or reduce these problems. Here's how.

1. Identify The Key Problem Areas

The **first thing** that needs to happen is to identify the key problem areas. One way to do this is for the business leader to identify the key tasks he/she performs on a daily basis and group these into a list of major categories. *Estimated time – 1hour.*

On single sheet of paper, create a table with categories across the top and days down the side, and use this as a simple tool to track how many hours

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LARRY VAN DEN BERGHE, Ph.D.

Larry van den Berghe is the President of Strategies 2 Innovate, Inc. He has 20 years international experience in the aerospace and information and communications technology industries in England, Australia, Singapore and Canada. He has been an active manager and contributor in R&D and new product development in electronics, VLSI and software. He holds two US patents, one UK patent and has a number of publications. He is a Chartered Engineer (UK) and a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical Engineers.

Larry is also an adjunct professor for the Management of Technology @Distance graduate program at the University of Waterloo and a past faculty member with the Technical University of British Columbia. He has developed courses in new product development, strategic management of innovation and technology, entrepreneurship and knowledge management. His recent research on core competencies examined the adoption of emerging technologies for product innovation within the Canadian information and communication technology industry.

He holds a Ph.D. in Management Sciences (Management of Technology) from the University of Waterloo, an M.Sc. in Microelectronics (with Distinction) from Middlesex University, London, U.K. and a B.Appl.Sc. in Applied Physics from Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia. Larry has served as Chairman, Board of Directors and is a Competent Toastmaster/Competent Leader with the Toastmasters International organization.

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 per day is spent solving operational problems in the main categories.
Estimated time – 1 hour.

Track this for two weeks and calculate the average hours per week per category. This may sound quite basic, but in reality it takes some discipline to complete.

Estimated time – 1 hour.

The result will show you immediately what areas of your business soak up your time each day. These could be any areas such as answering telephone calls, emails, order processing, ordering, manufacturing, shipping book-keeping and so on.

2. Identify What Is Happening

Next, create a list of what it is that is actually taking up your time in these key areas. This will give you an indication of what problems need to be solved or what process activities need to be developed to delegate these activities downward.

Estimated time – 1 hour.

3. Draw The Business Process

Select one of the critical areas you want to improve and draw a diagram of the business process.

This is usually done by creating a flow chart of the business process - an activity commonly referred to as process mapping. We'll devote the next issue of our newsletter to this topic.

4. Improve The Business Process

The final step is to identify problems, bottlenecks, barriers to process operations and places where information is not flowing, and design these out so that the process will run more smoothly and efficiently. We'll talk more about this later.

In just 4 hours, you can make a start to improving your business processes. Stay tuned for our next issue where we will examine techniques for mapping your business processes.

See you then!

Larry van den Berghe

For more information and for references to the literature as identified by superscripts notations (e.g. ¹) please visit our innovation strategy knowledge portal www.strategies2innovate.com and follow the links to "Knowledge References."

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 Toolkit™***

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 From Surviving to Thriving***

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